



To: School Superintendents, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Lead Persons

Route to: Elementary, Middle and High School Principals, Teachers, School Nurses, School Counselors

From: Christine Norbut Beyer, Commissioner
New Jersey Department of Children and Families

Date: September 1, 2021

In June of this year, with the help of First Lady Tammy Murphy, Hamilton Township's Superintendent Scott Rocco, and 2021 NJ Teacher of the Year Angel Santiago, New Jersey launched a [statewide awareness campaign](#) about Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs. The campaign includes practical tools, such as posters, flyers, fact sheets and a calendar of state and local training events available to educators at no cost.

Its messaging and information is strength-based, healing-focused, rooted in the latest research, and promotes a belief I know we all share – that we *all* can make a difference in the lives of children affected by adversity, through simple acts of kindness and compassion.

In child- and family-serving agencies – like schools and NJ DCF – we have learned a lot over the last few years about the lifelong impact of ACEs and how high rates of adversity in childhood can, if left unaddressed, lead to social, emotional, economic and health challenges into adulthood.

We now know that adversity can reshape the brain and transform the architecture of neurons and neurotransmitters. We also know that adversity can seep into a family's DNA, causing intergenerational trauma and inherited stress. And we know that adversity isn't limited by economic status, race, ethnicity, or community.

We also recognize that children and youth are not just the sum total of their adverse experiences, and that we can build up the foundation of resilience in children, to overcome adversity and disrupt the trajectory that ACEs can create for their lives.

We hope that you will join us in this campaign to spark innovative conversations, ideas and partnerships among educators in your district and across the state about how to support youth who have experienced ACEs – especially after a challenging year living through a global pandemic.

I invite you to learn more about ACEs by checking out the [Actions4ACEs](#) website, the state's [ACEs Action Plan](#) to reduce, mitigate and eliminate ACEs, and the [NJ Office of Resilience](#).

As always, the NJ DCF thanks you for your continued vigilance and dedication to your students and to all children in New Jersey. Best wishes for a great school year!